

Paraklausithyra in Plutarch's *Life of Antony*: Ruined at the Doors

This paper argues that Plutarch reworks the elegiac *paraklausithyron* (the “lament beside the closed door”) to mark Antony’s moral disintegration. Plutarch adapts the motif in two scenes into a moral commentary on personal failings and corrupted virtue. Section 29 recounts Antony and Cleopatra disguised as servants, wandering through Alexandria at night and mocking townspeople at their doors and windows. Even though the function is inverted, the structure of the *paraklausithyron* remains: the lover outside, the door closed. Instead of pleading, Antony ridicules and instead of resistance, Cleopatra joins him. What follows is not elegiac erotic lament but historiographic moral instruction. The scene around the door becomes a stage for Antony’s self-debasement, not exclusion. Later on in section 77, the motif returns in a grotesque form. After mortally wounding himself, Antony is raised by a rope through Cleopatra’s window. The threshold once closed to the *exclusus amator* now marks the passage to death. Formerly a symbol of desire, the transgression of the threshold marks a literal emblem of ruin. Across both scenes, Plutarch transforms elegiac custom into an instrument of moral critique. The failure of Antony to enact even the stylized form of the *paraklausithyron* parallels his failure as a political and moral figure. The distortion of *paraklausithyron* is not an accidental ornament but a deliberate choice by Plutarch to demonstrate Antony’s complete and utter degradation.

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